President’s Remarks

As we bid adieu to another year, let’s take a quick peek at how GAM fared in 2023.

GAM is on the rise! With a whopping 40% surge in membership over the last year, we now boast 238 active members, including new institutions, individuals, students, and corporate partners statewide. Kudos to the GAM board for spearheading a spring membership drive with one goal: inclusion. We’re all about giving all Georgia museums a say in GAM policies, programs, and professional development. The more, the merrier! Speaking of growth, the GAM board hustled this fall to chart our future. In September, we sent a survey to all GAM members, and you didn’t hold back! Your grades on our current impact, insights into key museum issues, and directional nudges provided invaluable insight. We convened an ad-hoc committee of past and present board and committee members to draft a three-year strategic plan. Laura Henninghausen, Director of Strategic Philanthropy at Atlanta-based Purpose Possible, guided our group discussions and facilitated the process. A special thank you to our committee members: Virginia Howell, Taj Stephens, Michael Lachowski, Mary Wilson Joseph, Rebecca Bush, Ashleigh Oatts, Jerald Crook, Melissa Swindell, Michele Rodgers, and Matt Davis.

The result of all this collaboration: a three-year vision to grow GAM’s impact, build our organizational effectiveness, enhance member benefits, and continue to support all GAM members at every career level. A big thank you to everyone who supported this process! Our strategic plan will be available on our website in January 2024.

As we all celebrate the end of 2023, I have something else to celebrate — we’re less than a month away from the 2024 GAM Conference in Athens. The host and program committees created an incredible program of sessions, tours, workshops, evening events, and more to help GAM find the right frequency. If you haven’t registered for the conference yet, what are you waiting for!? Early bird rates end January 5 — hurry up! You won’t want to miss hanging out with all your GAM pals in the Classic City. Visit gamuseums.org/conference for more information.

Wishing you and your families a joyous holiday season and many happy adventures in 2024!

Cheers!
Marcy Breffle
GAM President

Seasons Greetings from GAM!
GAM Institutional Members, we want to share content from your Instagram posts to the GAM Instagram account @gamuseums! You can help us: when you have a new exhibition, event, or other opportunity to announce, send your post to @gamuseums within Instagram using the “paper airplane” icon for sharing. Our IG account has 500 followers and growing, and it provides exposure and engagement for our members. Check out IG Story to see what our institutional members are doing.

In November 2023, several members of the Georgia Museum community had the opportunity to travel to Louisville, KY for the annual meeting for the Southeastern Museums Conference. Joining approximately 700 museum professionals from across the region, participants had the opportunity to tour museums throughout the city, engage in numerous sessions, offsite workshops, the expo hall, professional meetups and networking.

Our state’s museum community was well represented as numerous GAM members served as conference volunteers, session presenters, Program Committee Members, and as part of the Leadership Council.

GAM members also enjoyed several evening social events at museums throughout Louisville including the Evan Williams Brewery, Louisville Slugger Museum, 21C Art Museum, the Frazier History Museum, and Churchill Downs. Members also enjoyed the chance to sample Louisville’s outstanding downtown, which had numerous places to shop, eat, or to participate in a little late-night networking. The local host committee did an outstanding job in welcoming us to their city and this was truly one of the best conferences in the organization’s history.

If you have yet to participate in an SEMC Conference or are interested in becoming more involved with the organization, please visit SEMC’s website at semcdirect.net. The organization has numerous engagement opportunities throughout the year including virtual learning sessions, opportunities for volunteer service, leadership development, and opportunities to present. Additionally, please mark your calendars for SEMC 2024 in Baton Rouge, LA from October 21-23, 2024. More information will be forthcoming on this conference, and I look forward to seeing a large GAM contingent in Louisiana this year.

Matt Davis
President, Southeastern Museums Conference and Director of Historic Museums, Georgia College & State University
Can a conversation about the past heal the present?

In 2016, the Coffee County Historical Society and the Coffee County Memory Project launched an oral history project focusing on school desegregation in the late 1960s and early 1970s. During the planning stages, we wondered if anyone would talk to us. School desegregation had long been a taboo subject in the community. Many held vivid memories of this era but, if questioned, said simply, “It went pretty well. Nobody died.” For the next three years, we made a concerted effort to recruit participants. We followed up with some individuals every year until they agreed to speak with us. Although initially hesitant, with many protesting, “I don’t know if I have anything valuable to offer,” once in the interview, the floodgates opened. Former teachers, students, school administrators, law enforcement officers, parents, and activists participated. Interviews focused on school desegregation, but interviewees did not limit themselves to that subject. They recalled Jim Crow segregation and, unprompted, shared current racial struggles. Surprised by information that exceeded the mandate of our inquiry, we realized that interviewees saw current events as part of this continuum.

The wealth of material gathered enabled the creation of two virtual exhibitions: Emerging Voices of Coffee County and Overcoming Segregation: A Journey Through Coffee County’s Forgotten Stories, which received an Award of Excellence from the American Association of State and Local History in September 2023. While thrilled with this progress, the websites’ analytics made it clear that the exhibitions were rarely used by the people who had made them possible, Coffee Countians. We began to search for a solution.

In the spring of 2023, we received GAM’s MUSE Grant, and Dr. Ann Mc Cleary joined our team. Dr. Mc Cleary furnished us with resources to expand our approach to this work. She guided our team in planning a series of in-person events to bring community members together. This series will begin in January 2024. The first topic, “Teachers Telling Stories Out of School,” will feature a panel of retired teachers who will share their experiences of desegregation. Other session topics are “When Being First Meant Being Strong,” the experience of Freedom of Choice Students, and “All Together Now,” school year 1969 – 1970.

This series will culminate in an evening of song, stories, and discussion honoring project participants on April 26th at the historic movie theatre, The Martin Center. The following day, workshops will be available to community members interested in “Teaching Hard History” and “Racial Healing.” By broaching this once taboo subject honestly, we hope to learn from each other and open lines of communication that will enable discussion of present-day events so that together, we can create a dynamic, productive future.

Article provided by Coffee County.
Georgia Museum of Art

For more than 75 years, the Georgia Museum of Art at the University of Georgia has been serving its home state and more.

People are usually surprised to hear that the official state museum of art is in Athens, not Atlanta, but the museum’s founder was so focused on reaching the rest of the state that he used to put paintings in the trunk of his car and drive them around to show them to audiences all over Georgia.

Alfred Heber Holbrook was a retired lawyer from New York who discovered his appreciation of art late in life, but he came from a family that had always cared about education. His great-grandfather, Josiah Holbrook, helped establish the lyceum movement in the mid-19th-century US, promoting continuing education across the country. When Holbrook began collecting art, it was natural that he should think about using it to further others’ education. In New York, he met Franklin Roosevelt’s Federal Arts Program director, Holger Cahill, who suggested the University of Georgia as an ideal location for his collection. Holbrook’s initial visit to campus — where he first met famed artist, UGA School of Art namesake and soon-to-be close friend Lamar Dodd — made him fall in love with Athens and the university. He declared that the university had “more evidence of genuine art culture” than any he had visited in the South. He signed over his collection, moved to Athens and enrolled in UGA art classes, where he was known for donning a pink smock and smoking his pipe in class.


For more than 75 years, the Georgia Museum of Art at the University of Georgia has been serving its home state and more.
The museum finally got a building in 1948 — two galleries in the basement of the old university library — and quickly became part of the campus fabric, showcasing an ever-evolving display of works. Holbrook worked tirelessly to raise its profile, serving as its first director and borrowing art from all over the country to supplement its holdings even as he purchased hundreds of works for its collection.

Holbrook retired in 1969 after nearly 25 years devoted to his second career, but the museum didn’t stop growing. The 1970s also brought accreditation for the first time by the American Alliance of Museums. Family Day, a monthly program that remains overwhelmingly popular, started in 1986, attracting young people and their families from all over the Athens area to learn about art and make art projects. The museum’s internship program, started in the early 1990s, has provided thousands of undergraduate and graduate UGA students on-the-job training.

In 1996, the museum moved from UGA’s historic North Campus to its East Campus as part of the new Performing and Visual Arts Complex. A major expansion to those facilities opened in 2011, finally allowing the museum to display highlights from its permanent collection continuously, rather than alternating them with temporary exhibitions. Twenty-two galleries and a sculpture garden mean that there is always something to see.
Major gifts of works by the Catalan-American artist Pierre Daura, by African American artists, by contemporary artists, by photographers and by Russian artists have massively expanded the collection over the past two decades. Holbrook’s initial gift of 100 paintings by American artists now sits alongside more than 18,000 works by artists and artisans from all over the world.

GEORGE COOKE (AMERICAN, 1793 – 1849), "TALLULAH FALLS," 1841. OIL ON CANVAS, 35 1/4 × 28 1/4 INCHES. GEORGIA MUSEUM OF ART, UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA; GIFT OF MRS. WILLIAM LORENZO MOSS. GMOA 1959.646.


The museum is a leader among university museums, teaching audiences on and off campus through its many free programs, publishing dozens of scholarly books and catalogues, enabling research through its Study Centers in the Humanities and providing a place to rest and recharge at no cost. Despite the variety of temporary exhibitions on view, admission remains free, helping to remove at least one barrier to entry.

Over the past decade, the museum has collaborated with Athens’ Lyndon House Arts Center on a traveling triennial exhibition that highlights contemporary artists in Georgia and is available at low cost to other institutions in the state. Three quarters of a century after Alfred Holbrook had a dream to provide inspiring art to the people of Georgia, the Georgia Museum of Art is continuing to fulfill that vision.
A LOOK AT HOST SITES TO GIVE YOU AN IDEA ABOUT WHERE WE’LL BE AND WHAT WE’LL BE DOING AT GAM’24

The Graduate Hotel is the Host Hotel and Conference Site, located in downtown Athens.

The Church-Wadell-Brumby House and Historic Athens Welcome Center is right across the street.

The E.R.R. Cobb House next to downtown is hosting a Tuesday evening reception.
JANUARY 17 – 19, 2024

Athens!

THE GEORGIA MUSEUM OF ART AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA WILL OFFER TOURS AND HOST THURSDAY NIGHT

CARTER COLE COUNTRY DOCTORS MUSEUM IN NEARBY WINTERVILLE WILL BE OPEN AND OFFER A TOUR

THE UGA SPECIAL COLLECTIONS LIBRARY WILL OFFER TOURS AND HOST US ON THURSDAY EVENING

WE’LL FINISH THURSDAY’S PROGRESSIVE DINNER AT THE FOUNDRY, PART OF THE GRADUATE HOTEL

THE LYNDON HOUSE ARTS CENTER RIGHT BY THE GRADUATE HOTEL WILL HOST US FOR SESSIONS AND THURSDAY NIGHT

WE’LL BE IN DOWNTOWN ATHENS WITH PLENTY OF RESTAURANTS, SHOPS, ENTERTAINMENT AND BARS

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Advertise in the GAM newsletter

The GAM newsletter is published quarterly and sent to all institutional and individual members. It is also available on the GAM website. A 20+ year archive of the newsletter will be available to members only on GAM’s website.

To advertise, please contact Michele Rodgers at gamuseums@gmail.com.

New & Renewing Members

Since September 2023

Institutional
Albany Museum of Art
Augusta Museum of History
Autrey Mill and Nature Preserve
Aviation History & Technology Center
Bowdon Area History Museum
Chehaw Park
Church-Waddel-Brumby House
Coffee County Historical Society
Decatur County Historical & Genealogical Society
Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources
Historic Banning Mills
Paradise Gardens Foundation
Southeastern Quilt and Textile Museum
St. Simons Island Lighthouse Museum
Tellus Science Museum
Thomas County Museum of History

Individual/Student
Keri Adams
Becca Barnes
Vanessa Blanks
Marcy Breffle
Rebecca Bush
Madison Cosby
Jerald Crook
Karim Dalton
Matt Davis
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Not a member? Click here to join.
date night at the museum

STILL FRAME FROM “DATE NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM” BY GEORGIA MUSEUM OF ART INTERN SELIA HOOTEN. CLICK TO VIEW.

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